

Tell me a story

Promoting speech and literacy, parent education and integration at a young age

Summary

Good literacy skills are the strongest foundations of success, both at school and work. Children need to learn these skills early in life through experiences with narrative, oral and written culture, such as through stories, songs and nursery rhymes. "Schenk mir eine Geschichte" (Tell me a story) aims to promote such experiences in everyday family life. To achieve this, parents are encouraged to use their native language with their children, with help from speech and culture facilitators. After all, family is the most important factor in encouraging children to read. At regular meetings, parents learn how they can support their children in day-to-day life – in the language that the parents speak best and from which the children will benefit most.

The problem

Approximately one in five young people in Switzerland has trouble with reading and writing. This is especially the case with multilingual young people from immigrant families, who often grow up in socially and educationally disadvantaged environments. Early childhood is also the most critical time to build a solid foundation for literacy skills later on in life. If a child misses out on critical support during early childhood, the deficit is difficult to make up for later.

The partner

The Swiss Institute for Children's and Youth Media (SIKJM) is the only organization in Switzerland that specializes in children's and youth literature across all media. Projects that support literacy and motivate youth all across Switzerland make up the core of SIKJM's activities.

The solution

Parents and preschoolers participate in regular storytimes held in their native language. The facilitators also speak with parents about handling multilingualism and other questions on integration and raising children. The facilitators are bridge-builders who emphasize what their region has to offer, such as libraries and playgroups. Access to German language activities for preschoolers is key to successfully developing multilingualism in children. It's also imperative that parents speak to their children in their dominant language. Having a good grasp of a first language and early-acquired literacy

provide an important foundation for adding German as a second language and for future success in school.

The evidence

- Independent evaluations by the Pedagogical University of Zurich and the Marie Meierhofer Institute have demonstrated the impact of this project on children.
- "Schenk mir eine Geschichte" (Tell me a story) has been in existence for 13 years.
- When it was added in 2016, it was the only Swiss project to be included in UNESCO's Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database.

The impact

- "Schenk mir eine Geschichte" (Tell me a story) helped 2,071 families in 2018.
- Accompanying scientific studies found that the language skills learned are applied in day-to-day family life. They also found that this offer even reached less well-integrated families because it's easily accessible.



Location	15 cantons in German-speaking and French-speaking Switzerland
Target group	Immigrant families with children between 2 and 5 years old, who are multilingual and live in a socially and educationally disadvantaged area
Partner	The Swiss Institute for Children's and Youth Media (SIKJM)

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